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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if preservice teachers, during their student teaching experiences, were utilizing the strategies they had learned in university methods courses, and if these strategies were being modeled by the supervising teachers. Responses were obtained from 31 preservice elementary teachers. Students responded to questions based on the following constructs: classroom management; type of assessment; experiential learning; integrative curriculum; and multicultural education. A comparison of the means of the two groups (e.g., student teachers vs. supervising teachers) was made through the use of t-tests. There was a significant difference between how the student teachers perceived their use of effective instructional strategies and what they reported they had observed being used by their supervising teachers in all areas but one. The findings of this study indicate the need for closer collaboration between university student teacher field supervisors and supervising teachers. (Contains 13 references.) (Author/ND)

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ARE STUDENT TEACHERS ACQUIRING THE ULTIMATE OF FIELD EXPERIENCES?

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Are Student Teachers Acquiring

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine if preservice teachers, during their student teaching experiences, 1) were utilizing the strategies they had learned in university methods courses, and 2) if these strategies were being modeled by the supervising teachers. Responses were obtained from 31 preservice elementary teachers. Students responded to questions based on the following constructs:

- Classroom Management
- Types of Assessment
- Experiential Learning
- Integrative Curriculum
- Multicultural Education

A comparison of the means of the two groups (e.g., student teachers vs supervising teachers) was made through the use of *t* - tests. There was a significant difference between how the student teachers perceived their use of effective instructional strategies and what they reported that they had observed being used by their supervising teachers ranging from ($p < .000$ to $p < .031$) in all areas but one. The findings of this study indicate the need for closer collaboration between university student teacher field supervisors and supervising teachers.

Are Student Teachers Acquiring the Ultimate of Field Experiences?

Introduction:

Students in the teacher education program at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) are receiving exemplary training when it comes to acquiring a sound theoretical background, state-of-the-art instructional strategies, and hours of clinical experiences both field-based and in the university classroom (e.g., elementary students come to the university classroom during the summer sessions and evening classes in order to interact with preservice teachers on a regularly scheduled basis; Masztal & Singleton, 1994; Singleton, Masztal, and Flores, 1993).

Since the preservice teachers are leaving this university better prepared to meet the individual needs of students than their predecessors, the faculty in the teacher education program at USM wanted to ascertain if the student teachers, during their student teaching experiences, actually incorporated some of the strategies that they had learned during their methodology courses and if these strategies were being modeled by their master teachers. In order to do this, a survey was designed to address the following constructs:

1. Positive Classroom Management
2. Alternative Assessment

3. Experiential Learning

4. Integrative Curriculum

5. Multicultural Education

On this survey, the student teachers were asked to respond to their perceived level of engagement in the construct areas and then to indicate the extent to which they had observed their master teachers engage in or model the strategies that they had been taught. Responses were obtained from the 31 elementary student teachers through the use of a Likert scale, which provided a range of from 1 to 5 indicating how frequently a student teacher used or observed a strategy (e.g., 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4 = often, and 5 = daily).

Hypotheses:

It was hypothesized that the student teachers would indicate a frequent (e.g., 4 = often and 5 = daily) use of effective educational strategies in all areas. Conversely, it was believed that the student teachers' observations of effective, state-of-the-art strategies would be limited (e.g., 1 = never to 3 = occasionally). It was further hypothesized that there would be significant differences between the strategies that the student teachers implemented in the classroom and those that they observed being implemented, in the construct areas, by the master teachers.

Results:

The findings were as follows:

1. Occurrence of Hands-On Learning - $p < .001$ with the student teachers indicating that this had occurred more frequently under their direction ($p < .000$)

2. Use of Mathematics Manipulatives - $p < .001$ with the student teachers indicating that this had occurred more frequently under their direction

3. Positive Classroom Management - $p < .01$ with the student teachers indicating that they had used more positive strategies than they had observed being used

4. Use of Differentiated Grading - $p < .01$ with the student teachers indicating that they had considered the different ability levels of the students when evaluating their efforts more often than they had observed this being taken into consideration (e.g., students with special needs, etc.)

5. Writing Across the Curriculum - $p < .05$ with the student teachers indicating that they had engaged in this strategy more than they had observed it being used ($p < .031$)

6. Integrative Social Studies Units - $p < .001$ with the student teachers indicating that they had taught integrative units to a greater extent than they had observed them being taught

7. Multiculture Education - $p < .01$ with the student teachers indicating that they had addressed this more often than they had observed it being addressed

8. Use of Performance-Based Assessment - $p < .05$ with the student teachers indicating that they had observed more alternative forms of assessment being used than they had actually used

9. Use of Portfolios - There was no significant difference between the two groups in regard to portfolio usage.

A comparison of the mean levels of the two groups (student teachers versus master teachers), through the use of t tests,

indicated that there was a significant difference between the student teachers and the master teachers in regard to the extent to which each group engaged in the desired strategies, as reported by the student teachers, with the exception of one, portfolio usage. Then, although there was a significant difference between the two groups in the other areas, the results of one, the use of performance-based assessment, indicated that the master teachers used this form of evaluation more than the student teachers did.

Discussion:

In seven out of the nine areas surveyed, the student teachers in USM's teacher education program on the Gulf Coast campuses indicated that they did, in fact, engage in more effective educational strategies than they had observed being modeled for them. If was interesting to note, however, that there was no significant difference in the use of portfolios by either group with only 19 percent of the student teachers reporting that they used portfolios as a form of assessment either often or daily compared to 22 percent of the master teachers who were reported to have done the same. This finding was surprising due to the emphasis placed on portfolio usage in the teacher education program to the extent that the preservice teachers actually keep two types of portfolios in two of their methodology courses (e.g., mathematics and social studies). Furthermore, since the benefits of portfolio usage has been cited in the literature for several years (Herman, Aschbacher, &

Winters, 1992; Zessoules & Gardner, 1991), when it comes to the master teachers, these researchers wonder if this information is readily available to them. If not, the use of portfolios as an alternative form of assessment may be a potential area for staff development in the school districts surrounding the university.

The one area surveyed in which the master teachers modeled effective educational strategies to a greater extent than the student teachers implemented, during their student teaching experiences, was the one that addressed the use of performance-based assessment. This finding is of particular interest since 42 percent of the student teachers reported that their master teachers used this form of assessment on a regular basis. Despite this occurrence, only 26 percent, or approximately one fourth, of the student teachers reported that they had regularly deviated from the standard forms of evaluation. Once again, since performance-based assessment plays a major role in the way the preservice teachers are evaluated in their methodology courses (Marzano, Pickering, & McTighe, 1993), the results in regard to student teachers' use of alternative assessments were not encouraging.

Conclusion:

Although the findings of this study indicate that student teachers in the teacher education program at USM, on its Gulf Coast campuses, are, for the most part, engaging in more effective instructional strategies than they are observing during their student teaching experiences, it appears that more training

in the use of alternative forms of assessment needs to occur. As a result, plans are currently being made to intensify the preservice teachers' knowledge base and experiences in this area. Concurrently, plans to strengthen communication between the master teachers and the university's field supervisors, in terms of the expectations the university has for its students, are also being made.

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